LAKE LOS ANGELES CELEBRATES THE GRAND OPENING OF ITS FIRST GYMNASIUM AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

On July 3, 2013, the Community Development Commission of the County of Los Angeles (CDC), gathered with Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Department of Public Works, and the Lake Los Angeles community, to dedicate the Lake Los Angeles Gymnasium and Community Building at Stephen Sorensen Park.

The new 14,500 square-foot facility is the only gymnasium/community building serving the community's 12,000 residents. Prior to its construction, the nearest recreation facility was in Littlerock, ten miles away. Residents will now enjoy a multi-purpose room and classroom where their families can participate in fun and exciting programs such as tiny tots, after-school programs, and baby boomer bridge or bingo games. To improve agility and increase overall activity, youth and adults can participate in wrestling, boxing, basketball, volleyball, karate, and indoor flag football or soccer.

Visitors will enjoy facility amenities such as a welcoming lobby area, and a beautiful mural depicting the local history and native habitat of Lake Los Angeles in the multi-purpose room. The facility was designed to achieve a LEED Silver certification by incorporating environmentally conscientious designs that will substantially reduce water consumption, address storm water runoff, enhance indoor air quality, and make use of daylight throughout much of the building.

Lake Los Angeles has over 51% low- and moderate-income persons which qualified the project for federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. The $9.8 million gymnasium was funded through a combination of state and local funding and $345,000 of CDBG funds provided by the Fifth Supervisorial District. CDBG funds are used throughout the County to support local economies, strengthen public infrastructure, create jobs, and improve the quality of life for millions of low- and moderate-income residents.
Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich joined the City of Alhambra's elected officials and other invited guests on August 21, 2013, to commemorate the CDC's move to its new headquarters. Guests were welcomed by Sean Rogan, Executive Director, followed by remarks by the Supervisor, members of the City Council, and a representative of the Board of Equalization.

Following the agenda, the CDC's Public Information Office led groups on a tour of the building pointing out some of its unique attributes such as the state-of-the-art server room and in-house print shop, as well as the aesthetic features like the patio, and a lunch room that provides a view of the San Gabriel mountains.

The new building has been fully occupied since December 2012, and sits on the corner of Main Street and Atlantic Boulevard, welcoming visitors to Alhambra's main thoroughfare. CDC staff and its guests have been greeted warmly by local businesses, and have become frequent visitors at nearby eateries and retail stores. Additionally, since its relocation, the CDC has hosted visits from Los Angeles County Supervisors, as well as former and current officials from national organizations such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Bipartisan Policy Center based in Washington, D.C., bringing them into the heart of Alhambra. The CDC looks forward to many years of service at its new location.

On August 28, 2013, Dorismar Peterson, a resident of the Nueva Maravilla public housing development, became the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles’ (HACoLA) first Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program graduate. Ms. Peterson joined the FSS program in December 2011 with the goals of maintaining employment and saving to achieve homeownership. While her children participated in recreational and tutoring services offered by the Nueva Maravilla's Family Learning Center, she attended East Los Angeles College in pursuit of becoming a Registered Nurse (RN). Ms. Peterson completed the RN program and has been employed since 2011 as a full-time nurse.

In less than two years, Ms. Peterson established an FSS escrow account, and was able to become free of CalWorks-TANF benefits. Ms. Peterson voluntarily left public housing and moved her family to Texas in pursuit of homeownership. HACoLA commends her for her hard work and wishes her continued success!
CDF Awards 2013 Housing Authority Resident Scholarships

The Community Development Foundation (CDF) awarded over $25,000 in scholarship funds to HACoLA’s public housing residents and Section 8 participants on August 28, 2013. In total, 28 scholarships were awarded to students attending a 4-year university, community college, or vocational program. Past scholarship recipients have not only become architects, doctors, counselors, and lawyers, but have also become positive role models for youth growing up in subsidized housing.

One of the awardees, Juan Gutierrez, strives to move out of public housing and be a role model for others. He was once a lost student failing to thrive in both traditional and alternative schools. It's not that Juan wasn't smart enough to keep up, but rather, he lacked motivation. In 2011, Juan enrolled in LA CAUSA’s YouthBuild charter school, which helped develop him into a motivated student. This past June, at the age of 23, Juan graduated from high school and enrolled at East Los Angeles College and Antioch University Los Angeles’ Bridge Program, all while helping expand the first community garden in East Los Angeles with a grant from the Lead Now Fellowship. Juan aspires to be an academic counselor to help motivate students like him that slip through the cracks of overcrowded schools. HAR Scholarships are made possible by generous donations from CDC/HACoLA employees, Southern California Edison, Union Bank, and other private donors.

San Fernando Celebrates the Completion of Park View Place

Just over a year after breaking ground, San Fernando residents are calling Park View Place home. On August 22, 2013, the CDC joined Aszkenazy Development, Inc. (Developer), Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, State Assemblymember Raul Bocanegra, U.S. Congressman Tony Cárdenas, and San Fernando Mayor Antonio Lopez to celebrate the Grand Opening of Park View Place, a 61-unit affordable housing development for low-income individuals and families.

Joined by residents, neighbors, and supporters, officials were able to tour Park View Place which features a community room, fitness room, teaching kitchen, and community garden where residents can grow their own edible crops. Every unit is reserved for low-income families, with 20 of the 61 units reserved for families who are frequent users of the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services healthcare system and who were formerly homeless. Residents receive a full range of supportive services including: nursing care; job training; financial literacy classes; computer classes; preventative health screenings; as well as mental health and substance abuse services.

The CDC supported the project with $650,000 in acquisition funding through the Los Angeles County Housing Innovation Fund, $4.2 million in HOME Investment Partnerships Program funds, and $369,155 in Homeless Prevention Initiative funds. Additionally, HACoLA issued a $7.2 million multifamily housing mortgage revenue bond, which aided in financing the construction of Park View Place. HACoLA will continue to support the site by providing 20 project-based housing vouchers to ensure the site’s affordability for tenants.
During the month of August 2013, HACoLA sponsored its annual series of Back to School Jams at the Carmelitos, Harbor Hills, Nueva Maravilla, and South County (scattered sites) Public Housing Developments, where over 1,400 public housing youth kicked off the school season with fun and excitement! These annual events provide all public housing youth and their families with supplies and resources to make this year a success!

During the Back to School Jams, over 60 exhibitors provided educational and health-related resources and information to some 800 families. A partial list of participating agencies included: ACCORD Workforce Development Services, Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles County Work Source Centers, East LA Womens Center, Children's Hospital of Los Angeles, Goodwill Industries, California State University, Long Beach, as well as local businesses.

Public housing youth were treated to entertainment, food, dance, and raffles. However, the highlight of each Back to School Jam was the distribution of backpacks stocked with age-appropriate school supplies to public housing youth attending grades K-12. This year, HACoLA's Resident Services Program staff distributed 1,400 backpacks – the most ever distributed in the history of the Back to School Jams. In addition to free backpacks and supplies, students and their families also benefited from free school uniforms and other necessities. These gifts were made possible through the generous support of Target Stores, and Shelter Partnership, a local non-profit organization which provides resources and housing through its S. Mark Taper Foundation Shelter Resource Bank.

HACoLA Helps 1,400 Kids Prepare for the New School Year

September 1, 2013, marked the launch of the HACoLA Applicant Registration Portal, known as HARP. This much anticipated system will serve as HACoLA's new affordable housing waiting list registration system and provide advanced technology and increased security features. HARP will provide applicants the ability to search and register for available rental assistance programs such as the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher, Project-Based Voucher, and Public Housing programs.

Standard public housing authority waiting list systems are costly and lack customizable components necessary for maintenance. Recognizing the complexity of maintaining its various waiting lists, HACoLA's Assisted Housing Division staff committed itself to designing a system in-house to suit its needs and improve efficiency, security, and manageability. As the benefits of the new system became evident, the project was expanded to include HACoLA's Public Housing Program waiting lists as well. Over a period of five months, the Assisted Housing and Public Housing team worked together to roll out a state-of-the-art system.

Unlike HACoLA's previous online system that required an applicant to log in using a social security number and birth date, HARP requires the applicant to create a personalized log in that consists of a preferred email address, an applicant created username, and password. Once registered, HARP has internal safeguards that lock vital information which can only be modified by HACoLA upon verification. As an added measure, HARP pre-screens applicants allowing them to only register for lists that are available. With HARP in place, HACoLA is confident in its ability to safeguard the public's information, maintain the integrity of its rental assistance programs, and serve the thousands of applicants seeking housing assistance.

HACoLA Launches its New Applicant Registration Portal